



Satellite image with enhanced low cloud-top temperatures (degrees C) for 7:15 a.m. EDT (NOAA)

Agricultural Weather Highlights - Friday - August 15, 2003

- ***In the West***, hot, breezy, mostly dry weather is hampering wildfire containment efforts in the ***northern Rockies***, where the National Interagency Fire Center reports more than 50 active wildfires in excess of 100 acres. Farther south, however, scattered showers are easing irrigation demands and aiding drought-stressed rangelands in the ***Great Basin*** and ***Southwest***.
- ***On the Plains***, dry weather and soil moisture shortages favor fieldwork but continue to stress pastures and immature summer crops. In addition, hot weather persists on the ***northern High Plains*** and is gradually expanding across the remainder of the region, aggravating the effects of dryness.
- ***In the Corn Belt***, dry conditions remain a concern for filling corn and soybeans in the ***upper Mississippi Valley*** and areas along and west of the ***Missouri River***. Unlike the ***Plains***, however, high temperatures are not an aggravating factor in crop stress. Today's high temperatures may peak near 95 degrees F in the ***southwestern Corn Belt***, but are expected to remain below 90 degrees F across the majority of the ***Midwest***.
- ***In the South***, warm, mostly dry weather favors fieldwork and summer crop maturation. However, scattered showers linger across the ***southern Atlantic region***, while a few of Tropical Storm Erika's outer rain bands are brushing the ***central Gulf Coast***. At 7 a.m. CDT, Erika—packing maximum sustained winds near 45 m.p.h.—was centered about 440 miles east of ***Brownsville, Texas***, racing westward at nearly 25 m.p.h.

Outlook: Tropical Storm Erika may reach hurricane intensity before reaching the ***western Gulf Coast*** on Saturday near the mouth of the ***Rio Grande***. Elsewhere, typical summertime weather is in store for much of the U.S. through the weekend. A broad area of high pressure will maintain hot, dry weather on the ***Plains***, while an approaching cold front will spark scattered showers and thunderstorms across the ***eastern one-third of the nation***. Farther west, occasional showers will provide isolated heat and drought relief to the ***Rockies and Great Basin***, while cooler air will overspread the ***Pacific Northwest***. The NWS 6-10 day outlook for August 20-24 calls for above-normal precipitation in the ***northern Plains, Delta, and Southeast***, while drier-than-normal conditions are expected in the ***Northeast*** and from the ***Rockies westward to the Pacific Coast***. Above-normal temperatures are forecast from ***California and the Great Basin northeastward into the northern Plains***, but cooler-than-normal weather is expected in the ***Tennessee Valley*** and the ***central and western Gulf Coast States***.

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